

### INFORMATION FOR ADULTS WHO CARE ABOUT TEENS

# what's up?

## What's it all about?

Intentional injuries occur when people try to harm themselves or others. For teens this includes:

- carrying and using a weapon
- fighting
- dating violence
- forced sexual intercourse
- school related violence
- attempted or completed suicide

## Why does it matter?

In Washington state at least 150 teen deaths each year are due to preventable intentional violence. Recently, the Washington Attorney General released a report entitled “Bruised Inside, What Our Children Say About Youth Violence.” It points to home life and harassment as the factors that respondents believed to be key causes of youth violence. The report found that many of the tools for preventing youth violence are in the hands of parents and teens. Many youth who grow up with violence in the home use violence to solve their problems outside the home.

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## What are the details?

- More than 150 youth ages 15–24 in Washington die each year from intentional injuries.
- Suicide and homicide are the second and third leading causes of death for Washington youth ages 15–24.
- Nationally, homicide ranks second and suicide third as causes of death in youth. In 1996, the U.S. had the second highest youth homicide rate of the industrialized countries.
- National homicide rates for 15–19-year-olds dropped by a third between 1993 and 1997. Reports of fighting and gun carrying also dropped.
- 18% of Washington teens in grades 9 through 12 said they carried some form of weapon in the last month.
- 7.7% of Washington teens in grades 9 through 12 said they carried a weapon **to school** in the last month.
- Boys in grades 9 through 12 in Washington were 5 times more likely to report carrying a weapon and twice as likely to report physically fighting than girls in the same age group.
- 6.7% of Washington students in grades 9 through 12 said they had missed at least 1 day of school in the past month because they felt too unsafe to go to school.
- More than a third of Washington students in grades 9 through 12 reported they had felt unsafe while at school.
- 33.1% of Washington students in grades 9 through 12 said they had been in a physical fight.
- Bullying and “dissing” are perceived by children, parents, teachers and school administrators as being major causes of youth violence.
- Nationwide, 35.7% students had been in a physical fight once or more in the past year.
- 14% of Washington students reported they had been hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend. Nationwide, 8.8% of students were physically hurt on purpose by their partner in the past year and 8.8% of students had ever been forced to have sexual intercourse.

## INTENTIONAL INJURIES

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#### Why does it matter? (continued)

Here are some risk factors for youth delinquency and violence:

- Children who have been physically or sexually abused are more likely than other children to become violent teens and adults.
- Parents who are involved in criminal activities or are alcoholics are more likely to have violent teens.
- Teens are at increased risk if they perform poorly in school, had early conduct disorders or are gang members.
- Several reviewers have concluded that there is a link between exposure to violent television and aggressive behavior by youth. The average American child or teenager views an estimated 10,000 murders, rapes and assaults per year on television.

#### Kids who resist violence:

- Received a lot of attention during infancy from primary caretaker and others.
- Were more likely to grow up in a family with less than 5 kids, and at least 2 years between them.
- Grew up with structure and household rules during adolescence
- Had a close knit family.

#### Adolescents who resist violence:

- Are protected by strong connections with families, schools and friends.
- Are protected because parents are home more frequently at key times of the day.
- Report that teachers treat them fairly, feel a part of the school and say other kids are not prejudiced.
- Are taught ways of dealing with conflict that don't risk violence
- Are more likely to report that they cannot get a hold of guns, primarily hand guns.

#### What can I do?

- Help teens gain skills in the areas of self-control, decision making, problem solving, listening and communication.
- Encourage and promote cultural identity and acceptance of diversity.
- Promote a positive school climate that does not tolerate violence, aggression or bullying.

#### As a parent

- Notice what a teen is doing.
- Pay attention to school bullying.
- State the rules clearly.
- Make rewards and punishments depend on a teen's behavior.
- Negotiate disagreements so that conflicts do not grow larger.
- Talk to your family regularly about what frightens them. The ability to handle violence is a learned strategy that parents can foster through communication.
- Set up regular routines—dinnertime, homework and bedtime rituals for example.
- Encourage your children to develop their strengths and talents.
- Be available to listen and discuss your children's needs, concerns and desires.
- Protect the teen from physical and sexual abuse.

**hot  
links!**

Partnership Against Violence Network-PAVNET 1-800-851-3420 or [www.pavnet.org/](http://www.pavnet.org/)

American Psychological Association Raising Children to Resist Violence: What You Can Do—  
<http://helping.apa.org/family/raising.html>

Attorneys General of Washington State Attorneys General Report: Student Perspectives on Causes of Youth Violence (press release, April 10, 2000)—[www.wa.gov/ago/releases/rel\\_report\\_041000.html](http://www.wa.gov/ago/releases/rel_report_041000.html)

University of Minnesota, Department of Pediatrics Youth Violence: Lessons from the Experts (1998)—  
<http://youth.ucsf.edu/naic/products.html>

National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) <http://brendan.ncjfcj.unr.edu/homepage/ncjj/homepage--revised/overview.htm>

Justice Information Center Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention—1-800-851-3420 or [www.ncjrs.org/](http://www.ncjrs.org/)

Preventing Youth Handgun Violence: A National Study with Trends and Patterns for the State of Colorado. Arredondo, S., Aultman-Bethridge, T., Johnson, T. P., Williams, K. R., Ninneman, L., and Torp, K. 1999.

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence Youth Violence: An Overview (March 1994)

Washington State Department of Health Washington State Youth Risk Behavior Survey 1999—  
[www.doh.wa.gov/publicat/publications.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/publicat/publications.htm)



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